THE HUMAN SIDE OF IT

Social Service Department

EPISCOPAL HOSPITAL

Front Street and Lehigh Avenue, Philadelphia, Pa.

1915

The Human Side of It

A CROWD of patients sits every day in the dispensary of the Episcopal Hospital in Philadelphia—the tuberculous and the syphilitic, lame children and ill-nourished babies, unmarried girls about to become mothers, men and women broken by long hours of labor, sufferers from all sorts of diseases, bewildered, poor and ignorant.

A number is called, and the patient who rises is a tall, vigorous-looking man, a machine-shop worker, who has come to the Medical Dispensary after several months' futile treatment with various physicians for "bronchitis," hoping to be "built up" at the Hospital in a few days. The Dispensary doctor is obliged to tell him that he has pulmonary tuberculosis, and his only hope of recovery is to stop work and go to the country. The man is aghast. Where can he go, and who will provide for his pregnant wife and two small children during his absence?

A few years ago there would have been no answer in the Hospital for these questions. But now the Dispensary physician is able to refer the man to the Social Service Department, holding its office at present in a small room off the Dispensary. Here arrangements are made which result in the man's being sent within three weeks to the State Sanatorium at Mont Alto—hospital care is provided for the wife for her confinement, and she and the children are examined in the Dispensary and kept under observation to prevent their contracting the disease.

This is but an example—a real one—of the thousand of situations dealt with by this department. Begun in October, 1913, with one worker, the Social Service Department has now increased its staff to four and still has not nearly enough workers to do the work which devolves upon it.

Here are some of the things the Social Service of the Episcopal Hospital is now doing.

It increases the efficiency of the Hospital service to the patients by removing the dread of the Hospital, which exists in many ignorant minds.

It arranges care for young children during the mother's stay in the Hospital.

It sees that patients understand the directions of the doctor and have money to carry them out.

It helps the doctor by telling him if directions are followed at home. Very often a doctor is deceived by a patient in this regard, and on account of the unsatisfactory condition of the patient feels obliged to make a fresh examination, or prescribe a different treatment.

It refers patients to the proper social agencies—*e. g.*, Society for Organizing Charity, State Tuberculosis Dispensary, etc.

It investigates cases of unmarried mothers; if possible, awakens the father to a sense of his responsibilities, arranges for hospital care for the mother during her confinement, and afterwards helps her to secure honest employment.

It instructs mothers in the care of their babies. Many babies are brought to the Dispensary whose illness is due entirely to their mother's ignorance.

It interests crippled children in the Orthopedic Ward of the Hospital in kindergarten occupations, thus saving them many hours of listlessness and monotony. Last year the children made some really beautiful baskets, which were sold for their benefit.

It visits crippled children discharged from the Hospital in their homes, and sees that the prescribed treatment is kept up. A worker also does preventive work with children only slightly affected, arranges for them to join exercise classes, and sees that they have good food and fresh air at home.

It assists other agencies with medical problems.

It investigates patients' requests for free medicine, free treatment and surgical appliances, and finds out whether they are able to pay.

It finds other work for those afflicted with occupational diseases.

Our Department is accomplishing as much as it can with its present number of workers, but many crying needs still remain to be met. At present, the work is supported partly by hospital funds and partly by individuals. We need more funds, and we must appeal to the public for them. We appeal especially to the churches of the Diocese.

1. We need social service workers in the wards. At present our time is almost entirely taken up with Dispensary patients.

2. We must help abolish the practice of discharging the patients from the wards of a hospital without adequate knowledge of their plans and their prospects of recovery. We must be able to make such careful inquiries as will insure that the good accomplished by their stay will not be undone in the first few weeks at home.

3. We need more workers to instruct mothers in the care of their babies. It costs only a few dollars to save a baby from a death due to ignorance.

4. We need workers to follow up syphilitic and tuberculous patients and arrange for Hospital or Sanatorium care, to urge examination for other members of the family and to give home instruction.

We ask our readers to put themselves for one moment in the position of these people—to imagine their poverty, their ignorance and their bewilderment in the face of sickness. We ask them to imagine for one moment what it would mean to *them* to have a helping hand held out to them at such a time, when they most needed it—to have the cold impersonality of a hospital exchanged for the warm sympathy of friends who took pains to acquaint themselves with their problems and could accomplish ways to meet them. We ask, then, how they would feel if such help were lacking!

Such help will be lacking to many patients this year, unless we are enabled, through more funds and more workers, to extend our scope and efficiency. May we count on you to help with contributions towards this work, and, if possible, to interest others in it?

There should be a group of efficient sympathizers working as an Auxiliary to the Social Service Committee (see back page of folder). If you are interested, will you not let it be known to one of the committee?

SOME TYPICAL CASES

Anna Simms, a very intelligent and attractive girl of seventeen, was discharged from the Hospital cured of tuberculosis of the hip, but permanently lame. She had no money, no friends or family who could help her, and knew no way to earn her living. Through the Social Service Department a place was found for her to do housework in an artists' colony in the country, and at the same time attend the country school and receive instruction from some of the artists in drawing and arts and crafts work, in which she has shown great proficiency. She is becoming skilful in profitable work. What would have happened to her if she had been thrown on the world without resources?

Dorothy Lewis, a girl of ten, is afflicted with a very rare disease, tuberculosis of the skin. This is not infectious, but owing to the appearance of her face she was refused admission to all the schools. The Social Service Department explained the case to a teacher and found a place for her in an out-door class. It also sees that she comes to the Hospital every day for treatment.

Emma White was an elderly servant whose run-down condition prevented her taking a place as general servant. She was entirely without money, and was greatly relieved

to have a place found for her by the Social Service Department for light housework which she was able to do.

Katie G. was a girl of good instincts, led astray by a man under promise of marriage. When her condition became apparent and she came to the Hospital, her family would have nothing to do with her. Owing to the efforts of the Social Service Department, an aunt was induced to take her in. She went to a maternity hospital for her confinement, and after the baby was born, her pride and affection for it seemed to change her whole nature. The Department found her a place as houseworker in a good family in the country, where she is allowed to keep her child.

Laura B. had worked ten hours, six days a week, for ten years in a varnish mill, and was incapacitated for further work of this nature. Easier work was found for her in the filing department of another concern. She shows marked intelligence, is progressing rapidly and is recovering her health.

Charles Tucker was a baby eight months old and weighing only 8½ pounds. (The proper weight for a baby of this age is 18½ pounds.) The mother had not fed it properly, wrapped it in many thicknesses of blankets, and had a horror of fresh air. One of our staff made daily visits to the home, instructing the mother in the care of the baby. The mother learned rapidly, the baby is now healthy, and the general condition of the home is much improved.

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